

NOVEMBER, 1951

VOL. 18, No. 3



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The American RECORD GUIDE



NOV. 1951 • Vol. XVIII, No. 3

formerly

The American Music Lover

A New "Record Guide" and Editorial Notes

▲ I should like to talk about a new record book which has recently been issued in England. It is called *The Record Guide*, and its authors — two of the ablest and most readable critics — are Edward Sackville-West and Desmond Shawe-Taylor. The book is published by Collins of London and is available in this country (it is distributed by British Publications, Inc. through book and music stores). It is a handsome volume, numbering some 763 pages. That it deals mainly with the English scene, and mostly with 78 rpm records, does not curtail its value among record buyers in this country, even though LP discs are preferred here by the greater majority. It is to be hoped that many of the wonderfully recorded works, made in England, will someday in the near future be re-released on LP discs. I am told that the prime reason that this has not happened is owing to the fact that the English companies have developed the finest shellac record ever made and, as they have a corner on the shellac market, they can manufacture these discs cheaper than they could LPs. There is a chauvinistic attitude among British engineers and critics regarding their recordings; a most unfriendly one toward our LPs. The short section of 34 pages given to LP discs in this new book hardly does justice to the subject, nor to many of the recordings reviewed. I have talked with engineers and critics on this subject and they mostly feel that either English equipment is unable to reproduce properly some of these

discs, or there is reason to believe that bias prevails.

As one long associated with recordings, I am fully aware of the exhaustive labor that the writing of this book entailed. That at no time are there any evidences of haste or sought-after opinions speaks for the qualifications of both writers. As critics, they have been long associated with the British Broadcasting Company, the *Observer*, *The New Statesman* and *The Gramophone*. Both are, besides being discerning critics, polished writers. Mr. Sackville-West will be recalled by readers of this magazine for his fine articles and his quarterly surveys of British recordings which appeared in the pages of this magazine several years ago. The latter have been taken over by *The Gramophone*. Mr. Sackville-West, who comes from a family of notable writers, has affirmed his heritage in other fields besides musical criticism. He has written some fine prose work and essays in which his innate musical nature has always served him advantageously.

This is the most scholarly and urbane survey of recorded music that has been published to date. There is no mistaking the cultural background of its authors, which contributes to their refinement in style and much writing that borders on true poetic premises. This also contributes to some intolerance toward music and artistry that achieves so-called popular success. Like all high-minded critics, they have very definite ideas of their own

which they conscientiously exercise without malice or ill-will. It is good to find such intelligent critics taking up the cudgels for some of the undeservedly misunderstood composers — Fauré and Szymanowski immediately come to mind. Their appraisals of both art and artistry are on the whole not only just, but fostered by true knowledge of the subjects. The pattern of the book includes short discourses on the composer, his place in the scheme of things and their own evaluation of him. Following these are listed the recordings available in England with some additions of importations. Remarks on the quality of reproduction and interpretation are liberally provided, but sometimes one or two stars are placed after a listing as symbols of the merit of performance and reproduction without comments. In the preface, the authors state that these stars in no way refer to the quality of the music. The book deals with available records in England through releases of December 1950.

The Record Guide, I am told, has had a wonderful reception in England and is already in its second edition. Those interested in fine recordings will assuredly wish to add this volume to their library, especially if they purchase consistently British recordings.

* * *

▲ I have been reminded at the last minute that we have had over 300 cards and letters regarding the late publishing dates

of the last three issues. It is flattering to us that so many have such quick perception of the passage of time. To those of us who work in a field in which no set time can be apportioned, it is a matter of accomplishing as much as can be done, and only praying that time will extend itself to permit us to accomplish more in a given day.

At the request of readers and the record companies, we decided to publish at a later date in order to include reviews of the important issues of the month.

There is a mistaken idea among some record buyers that anything advertised is already available. This is not true. However, we are aware that many record concerns make a habit of placing their releases in dealers' shops before sending them to record critics or notifying publications of their existence. Some record concerns make it a practice to send their releases first to those reviewers from whom they are assured of favorable reviews. It has always seemed to me unfortunate that such log-rolling is encouraged — much less sanctioned — by the record companies. I question the value of inviting reviewers, who are not above this sort of practice, to write for the house organs of record companies.

We believe it best for the time being to publish the magazine around the tenth of the dated month. In a field as highly specialized as ours, a set date for publishing is not easy to maintain.

(Continued on page 72)

THE AMERICAN RECORD GUIDE, published at Pelham 65, N.Y. *Editorial Office*: 115 Reed Ave. *Business Office*: Room 11, Post Office Bldg.

● Peter Hugh Reed, *Editor*; C. J. Luten, James Norwood, *Associates*; Philip L. Miller, Anson W. Peckham, Harold G. Schonberg, Donald Richie, Max de Schauensee, James G. Roy, Jr., *Contributors*. Paul Girard, *Advertising and Circulation*; Julius J. Spector, *Art Editor*.

● Published on the first of each month. **The American Record Guide**, sells at 30c a copy. Annual subscription in the U.S.A. and Canada, \$3.00. In all foreign countries, \$3.25.

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● Change of Address — this requires a month's notice. No responsibility assumed for copies not received due to removal without notice. ● Correspondence must be accompanied by return postage.

● Reentered as 2nd class matter Nov. 7, 1944 at the Post Office at New York, N.Y. under the act of March 3, 1879. Additional re-entry at Post Office, Easton, Pa., June, 1950. (Contents copyright 1951 by Peter Hugh Reed.)

ON RECORD COMPENSATION

TECHNICAL TALK

By H. Vose Greenough, Jr.

THE GENERAL response to the first article in this series was for concise information on the matter of record compensation. The simplest approach to this subject is to examine the basic problems of making a recording.

Musical sound consists of extremely small pressure variations in the surrounding air, acting on the eardrum or upon the delicate diaphragm of a microphone to produce in one case the sensation of sound, and in the other case to generate a very small electrical voltage which exactly corresponds to these pressure changes. The sensation of pitch — the ability to distinguish between one tone as high and another as low — is dependent upon the number of vibrations per second of the sound, more correctly called the *frequency* and expressed in cycles per second. The human ear (and I stress human, as many animals have senses of hearing radically different from ours) is capable of responding to frequencies as low as 16 cycles and as high as 20,000 cycles. Musical sound, however, is composed of frequencies lying between the limits of 30 cycles and 15,000 cycles. Perfect reproduction of all frequencies between these limits is generally regarded as duplicating the original sound. The concept of *timbre* must also be introduced into the discussion if the matter of record compensation is to be properly understood. Musical sounds are never

pure single frequencies, unless produced by a tuning-fork or an electrical oscillator, which generate what the physicist calls a *sine wave*. This pure tone, however, is not encountered in nature, and all musical sounds, whether produced by the human voice or by instruments, are made up of not only a *fundamental* frequency (always the lowest frequency in the tone), but also of overtones, which are integrally related to it. For example, the overtones of the note middle A, played by a violin string, with a frequency of 440 cycles per second, are 880, 1320, 1760, 2200, and so forth. Overtones as high as twenty times the fundamental frequency are present in certain instruments.

Now the ratio of the amount of different overtones in a sound constitutes the *timbre* of the sound, and is what permits us to distinguish between the sound of the flute, for example, which has few and predominantly even-numbered overtones, and that of the oboe, which is extremely rich in upper *harmonics* (an alternative term for overtones). It should be clear, then, that any reproducing system which fails to include all the components of a sound, with the original relationships undisturbed, will not only make certain notes either unduly prominent or absent, but will moreover fail properly to reproduce *timbre*. With such a system, which can be called one with *frequency distortion* as opposed

to harmonic distortion, the true *timbres* of instruments will not be properly reproduced — (i.e., the oboe and violin can actually be made to sound like the flute).

If the microphone, the amplifier, or any part of the recording system, including the loudspeaker, used to reproduce the sound falls short of reproducing the frequencies in the exact proportions existing in the original sound, such reproduction will be faulty. When the higher frequencies are unduly emphasized, the sound will be harsh and shrill, and conversely, when the higher frequencies are reduced or *attenuated*, the sound will be dull and flat. If too much low frequency sound is reproduced, on the other hand, this results in a booming bass. An attenuation of the lower frequencies will result in a feeling of tonal top-heaviness, or better, a feeling of lack of substantial bass.

So far, it has been established that perfect reproduction requires perfect retention of the original tonal frequency relationships throughout the entire reproducing system. Now the fly in the ointment in the recording process is that, for certain good reasons which I am about to discuss, there are drastic alterations made in the frequency balance during the recording and playback process. This must be fully understood before one can obtain proper playback of a record.

Starting with the low-frequency end of the musical spectrum, let us look at what is commonly done in recording practise. In lateral-cut discs, which are in general use in all recordings intended for home use today, the sound is engraved on the record in the form of a spiral groove, whose side modulations correspond exactly to the minutest pressure variations in the original sound. For several reasons, however, one is forced to engrave not a mathematically exact pattern of the sound but a deliberately altered one, with great variations in both the low and high portions of the sound spectrum. Because the *amplitude* or size of the groove modulation increases as the frequency drops, were one to engrave the sound without alterations to the low frequency portion, one would

quickly run into a point where the grooves would touch, and what is known as *overcut* would result even at very low sound levels on the record. In order to be able to record with a suitably high level, one is forced to reduce or attenuate the lows at a definite rate during the recording process. This has been done ever since the inception of disc recording. It has been the practise to reduce the low frequencies at a rate of six decibels per octave (that is, for every halving of frequency), starting at some frequency between 300 and 1,000 cycles. Built into the amplifier used for playback, or sometimes into the pickup itself, is a compensating circuit which raises the low frequencies in playback at the same rate at which they were reduced when recorded. This device yields a true compensation for the low end of the spectrum if said compensation has been properly accomplished.

But now the villain of the story must be introduced — the record manufacturer himself. While one is accustomed to buying light-bulbs and electric plugs which would fit most American outlets, one is dismayed to find that in the record industry little or no attempt has been made at standardization. This sad state of affairs has resulted in any number of different low-frequency characteristics to be found in records not only of different manufacturers, but even within the products of the same company. I should now like to introduce a new term — *turnover*. This is defined as the point at which low frequencies begin to be attenuated in recordings. From the turnover frequency down, the lows are attenuated at a rate of six decibels per octave. For many years, it seems to have been common practise in lateral recording to place this turnover frequency around 300 cycles, which, by a little calculation, requires only 18 decibels at 30 cycles, close to the lowest frequency in recorded sound. In an attempt to get a higher and higher dynamic level on the record, and to avoid the possibility of overcutting at these new higher levels, recording firms started to raise the turnover frequency to as high as 1,200 cycles. For a

turnover of 1,000 cycles, which is found on many of the recordings in this country made in the middle 1930s, one needs not 18 but 30 decibels of compensation at 30 cycles, to restore low frequencies to their proper balance.

It should be clear that a record made with a 350 cycle turnover would have an impossible bass boom on equipment designed to compensate properly for records with 1,000 cycle turnover. Conversely, any attempt to play the 1,000 cycle turnover on equipment designed for a 350 cycle would result in a very weak and inadequate bass response. Manufacturers have in general been unwilling to publish their own recording characteristics, with the result that proper compensation is possible only with a variable device — giving a number of different turnover frequencies — which can be set by ear for the most satisfactory results. With two or three cardinal exceptions, to be referred to later in this article, record manufacturers are to blame for the existing confusion.

The situation in relation to high-frequency response is similar, for it is as advantageous to good reproduction to alter the high-frequency portion of the spectrum during recording, as it is to attenuate the bass. However, instead of being attenuated, the high frequencies are *pre-emphasized* or accentuated in recording. The reasons for this are simple to understand. Remembering that the amplitude of the engraved sound grows larger as the frequency decreases, the converse of this is that the amplitude grows smaller as the frequency becomes greater. At very high frequencies, such as constitute the overtones defining *timbre* in recorded sound, the amplitude becomes so small that the minute modulations of the groove are as small as the particles of which the record is made. As most disturbing noise comes from the high-frequency components, reproduction of the irregularities of the record gives rise to that annoying accompaniment to music known as surface hiss.

It has long been known that one can materially improve the "signal-to-noise"

ratio (the ratio between wanted musical sounds and unwanted surface noise) by raising the highs during recording and attenuating them during playback. Again, the important thing is to make playback with a high-frequency loss that corresponds exactly to the rate at which the highs were raised during the recording process. If this is not done, a false reproduction will surely be obtained of the desired sound. (Too little attenuation on playback gives shrill and unnatural sounds, and too much removes the delicately recorded overtones defining the *timbre*, making the sound dull and flat.)

All would be well if manufacturers were in any way consistent in the manner in which pre-emphasis is accomplished. One manufacturer may feel that none should be used (typical of British engineering practise which relies upon nearly perfect shellac to achieve tolerably low surface-noise), while another may use as much as 15 or 20 decibels of pre-emphasis at 10,000 cycles. Without the proper compensating circuit in the playback system, it is impossible to reproduce a record correctly. A variable control is actually necessary to cover the large divergence in high-frequency pre-emphasis found in modern recordings, particularly among 78-rpm discs.

The situation with LP is fortunately much happier. This is almost entirely due to the extreme foresight and praiseworthy attitude of Columbia — the firm which first introduced LP to the record world. In 1948, almost as soon as LP was first released, this company invited all other firms in the business to confer on standardization of the LP recording characteristic before the wide divergence already existing in 78-rpm recordings could develop. At this time, Columbia published their own recording characteristic, the result of years of recording research, and, with certain signal exceptions, was successful in getting this curve generally adopted in the industry. A short while before this, the firm of Decca in England published the recording curve for their famous "ffrr" recording system, enabling

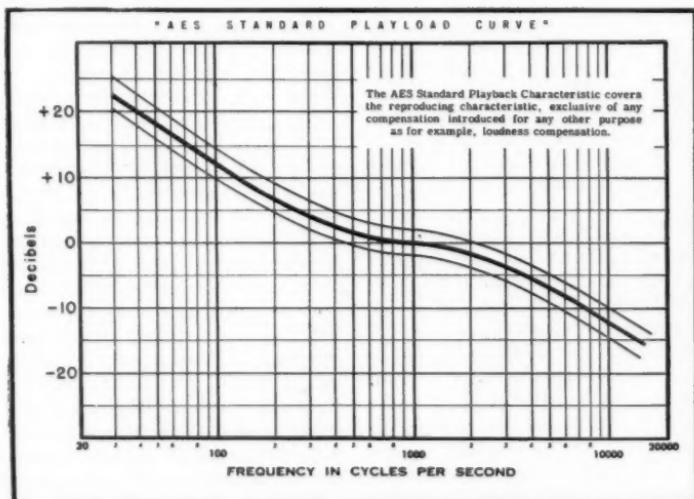
one to design exact compensation for these discs. A few American firms, mostly small independents, had also published their characteristics, but this had little effect on the large manufacturers.

In 1951 the Audio Engineering Society, whose membership includes most of this country's prominent recording engineers, proposed a modification of the recording characteristic, or more properly speaking, defined a standard playback curve to be built into all phonographs. This curve, called the AES Playback Curve, automatically defines the recording characteristic required to give perfect reproduction. Widespread adoption of this should do much to clear up a most undesirable condition in the industry.

In closing, there is a bright side to the picture. It should now be perfectly clear that failure on the part of any record listener to have both proper turnover and high-frequency compensation for his recordings can only result in distorted versions of the original sounds. However, several of the higher quality amplifiers on

the market today have extremely versatile compensation circuits, which permit a very wide range of records to be perfectly compensated. Moreover, technical articles appearing in various publications such as *Audio Engineering* and *Electronics* often describe new and ingenious methods of achieving truly accurate compensation. Such a circuit was designed by Benjamin Drisko and described by him and Paul W. St. George in the March 1949 issue of *Audio Engineering*. This circuit has been used for some time with complete success by the author in his studio.

With such a circuit, almost any make of record can be compensated, as both turnover and high-frequency compensation are separately variable. Anyone who has used such a compensator knows that it is capable of radically revising one's views on the merits of a recording. An incorrectly compensated recording gives a very inadequate reproduction, hence such a device is an absolute requisite not only for the record critic but for the discriminating listener as well.



Otto Klemperer Conducts Mahler and Beethoven

MAHLER: *Symphony No. 2 in C minor (Resurrection)*; Vienna Symphony Orchestra with Ilona Steingruber (soprano), Hilde Ross-Majdan (alto), and Akademie Kammerchor conducted by Otto Klemperer. Vox LP set PL-7010, 2 discs, \$11.90.

BEETHOVEN: *Missa Solemnis*, Op. 123; Ilona Steingruber (soprano), Else Schuerhoff (alto), Ernst Majkut (tenor), Otto Wiener (bass), Akademiechor, Vienna Symphony Orchestra conducted by Mr. Klemperer. Vox LP set PL-6990, 2 discs, \$11.90.

BEETHOVEN: *Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67*. Vox LP disc PL-7070, \$5.95.

BEETHOVEN: *Concerto No. 4 in G major, Op. 58; Gulomar Novaes* (piano). Vox LP disc PL-7090, \$5.95. Both with Vienna Symphony Orchestra conducted by Mr. Klemperer.

● THESE are the finest recordings that Klemperer has accomplished in recent years. Neither the over-worked Vienna Symphony Orchestra, however, nor the place in which these recordings were accomplished, do justice to the fine musicality found here. It is also unfortunate that the quality of reproduction is not on a par with Columbia's recordings of Mahler and Beethoven symphonies, though it is adequate enough to provide enjoyment of the conductor's artistry and the music.

Mahler, one of the most controversial composers of modern times, was a strong-willed character, intensely dramatic and highly imaginative. Often conceiving sequences of great nobility, he frequently bordered on the melodramatic. The *Second Symphony* (known as the *Resurrection*) bears this out, and yet it would be difficult to outline a single insignificant note. Mahler, who became an ardent Catholic, affirms his religious ideals in the last two sections.

It is fitting that Klemperer, a friend and associate of Mahler, should perform this symphony — perhaps the most widely known and admired. He makes this music live as strongly as any conductor I have heard. One is always aware of his exacting direction, yet he never permits his personality to obscure over that of the composer. Walter does this in Mahler too, but unlike Klemperer his conductorial control slackens on occasion. While some of the playing here is rough in tonal quality, Klemperer on the whole gets exceptionally fine results.

Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* suffers from some confusion of overlapping sound, as the relation between chorus and orchestra lacks a clarifying balance. Klemperer's performance is nevertheless the best yet on records. Koussevitzky's treatment of the music was too disconnected, his feeling hardly substantiating its German origin. Both chorus and soloists in the present performance are closer to the spirit of the music.

Klemperer's *Fifth Symphony*, carefully worked out for detail and correct dynamics, is consistent throughout. In the lyrical moments the conductor relaxes without slackening his hold, but in the *fortissimo* passages its tonal qualities are rough and lacking in unanimity, as, for example, with the loud opening statement of the theme, which when repeated softly is immediately tonally ingratiating. Klemperer's slow movement is as beautiful as any on records.

The mating of Novaes and Klemperer was a happy thought. This work is poetic in content from its opening bars, and Novaes' music-making throughout is refined and tonally lovely. Others

bring more vitality to the finale, but Novaes is not wrong in keeping this music consistently singing. Klemperer's accompaniment is carefully regulated, the orchestral shading just right. Perhaps what one misses at first is some of the brightness associated with the concert hall. The balance here is however more equitable, and the intimacy of performance of this most gracious of all women players is rather welcome.

—P.H.R.

MAHLER: *Das Lied von der Erde*; Elsa Cavelti (mezzo-soprano), Anton Dermota (tenor), Vienna Symphony Orchestra conducted by Otto Klemperer. Vox LP disc PL-7000, \$5.95.

● IN JANUARY and February 1948, we published an article on Mahler by the distinguished critic of *The Manchester Guardian*, Neville Cardus. It is an article which all who admire the composer should read. In it, Cardus says, "All the best of Mahler is in this work [*Das Lied von der Erde*], the native poet, the cunning artist, the child and the man, and the gatherer of harvests and the sower of new seeds, the composer who brought the romantic movement in music to an end and also pointed the way to the immediate future."

This recording, issued last spring, did not come my way until recently. Perhaps, because I owned the fine Bruno Walter performance, I did not feel the necessity of seeking it on the outside. Once again, Klemperer reveals his discerning musicality. He contrives to get generally clean articulation and smooth flowing results from the orchestra at his disposal, but the playing is not on a par with that of the old Vienna Philharmonic. But the detail of his performance is better revealed by the finer quality of the well balanced recording, which has liveness and more brightness than the Mahler *Second Symphony*. The soloists are well chosen for their musical abilities, but only Dermota has a voice of equal appeal to his predecessor, Kullman. Miss Cavelti's voice lacks variety of coloration and the ability to sing softly when required. Her "farewell" has not the elegant beauty of tone of Miss Thorborg's.

—P.H.R.

RCA Victor's Operatic LP Re-releases

DEBUSSY: *Pelleas et Melisande* (Opera in 5 Acts); Irene Joachim (Mélisande), Germaine Cernay (Geneviève), Leila Ben Sédira (Le Petit Yniold), Jacques Jansen (Pelléas), Etcheverry (Golaud), Paul Cabanel (Arkel), Narbonne (The Doctor), Yvonne Gouverne Chorus and orchestra conducted by Roger Desormière. RCA Victor LP set LCT-6103, 3 discs, \$16.35 (also 45 rpm set WCT-61, \$0.00).

MOZART: *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Opera in 4 acts); The Glyndebourne Festival Recording, direction of Fritz Busch. RCA Victor LP set LCT-6001, 2 discs, \$10.90 (also 45 rpm set WCT-54, \$0.00).

MOZART: *Don Giovanni* (Opera in 2 Acts); The Glyndebourne Festival Recording, direction of Fritz Busch. RCA Victor LP set LCT-6102, 3 discs, \$16.35 (also 45 rpm set WCT-59, \$0.00.)

MOZART: *The Magic Flute* (Opera in 2 Acts); Soloists, Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus, directed by Sir Thomas Beecham. RCA Victor set LCT-6101, 3 discs, \$16.35 (also 45 rpm set WCT-54, \$0.00).

● In January 1945, it was my privilege to review this history-making set of Debussy's only opera, which was made in the winter of 1941-42 and released in occupied Paris in May 1942. The first

recording to reach this country was sent to me in 1945 by Robert Plug-Felder, Jr., of Philadelphia — then in the Armed Forces at Paris. The opera, presented in its entirety, took twenty 12" discs. The wartime pressing was not good, but the excellence of the performance was nonetheless substantiated. It was at once apparent to me that Désormière's orchestra direction was exceptionally fine, possessing the correct proportions to hold intact the content of the drama — for it was the true "tonal envelope," which Debussy intended it to be, neither too weighty nor too light.

Most opera houses in this country where this music drama is performed are too large for the intimacy of mood that is essential to the best interests of Debussy's music and to the interpreting artists. As I previously said (in connection with this recording), hearing this opera from the phonograph demands visual imagination, which proved less effortful than I had expected. As a matter of fact, the other-wordly qualities of the drama and the music, its reticence and lack of emotional stress, proved more palatable in imagination than in reality. The pathos of Mélisande's death scene became more moving to me from the recording than it ever did in the theatre.

The singers in this set are all completely at home in their parts. Miss Joachim's portrayal of Mélisande has youthful fragility and the necessary aura of mystery associated with the character. Her voice — light and sweet — is used effectively. Jansen's Pelléas has youth and charm. His voice is supple and true but lacking in the expressive warmth and dramatic fervor of Panzera. Etcheverry and Cabanel are fine artists, memorable in their parts. Cernay is a sympathetic Geneviève and Sedira is a believable Vnoïd. The whole production, under the artistic direction of Louis Heydt, suggests a labor of love for what rightfully is one of the great contributions to French opera. One thinks of this in relation to the time in which the performance was accomplished. The recording is satisfactory, though it shows its age. However, considering the quality of the original and the type of war-time masters which Victor had to cope with, the results that have been obtained are no less than remarkable. There is a believable balance between the singers and the orchestra, a slight loss of highs, but the overall smoothness of the present reproduction is to me more gratifying. If one turns up the volume control, there is sufficient realism to assure one's enjoyment.

The Mozart Operas

The same can be said of the LP versions of the Glyndebourne Festival performances of Mozart's *Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*, and also of Beecham's *Magic Flute*. With controls lifted to increase the volume of sound, few listeners will be able to detect the slight loss in highs, as it has been minimized. To live with these fine performances in LP versions is to derive the most enjoyment from them. Moreover, though one has heard more recent and better recordings of praiseworthy performances — of at least two of these operas — the excellence of the singing and the orchestral playing very soon retards memories of recording advancements. For music such as this is more intimately associated with artistry than with reproduction. And, hearing these familiar performances at long last from LP discs makes one more appreciative of their sterling qualities. The spirited and ever fluent direction of the late Fritz Busch in *Figaro* and *Don Giovanni* is prized the more from these releases.

And, in like manner, so is the ever gracious and always dramatically expressive direction of Sir Thomas Beecham. Surely his *Magic Flute* was a milestone in his career as well as a milestone in recorded opera. Though Columbia's new sets have some wonderful singers, one who has lived with these earlier offerings can hardly forget the Figaro of Domgraf-Faessbender or the Pamina of Lemnitz and the Queen of the Night of Berger. Listening to the Glyndebourne recording now uninterrupted by its former 4-minute breaks, the

Haydn Society set seems a distant memory — like some once-heard performance that did not quite succeed in leaving a lasting impression. The truly patrician Don Giovanni of Brownlee, the valiant Don Alfonso of Ina Souza, and the charming Zerlina of Miss Mildmay — these are operatic portraits etched in wax that remain indestructible. While I have no reason to believe Beecham's *Faust* will not prove as good as the present sets, I cannot report on it as it has not reached me.

Editorial Notes

(Continued from page 66)

With the long hours of listening that I and my colleagues have to do in these times, added to our everyday work, it does not allow for much leisure. If I am remiss in answering correspondence, I am sure most readers understand the reason.

CONSUMERS' LP RECORD REVIEW

A MONTHLY DIGEST of reviews of all available LP releases for any given month prepared for convenient housing in any standard looseleaf binder. This concise summary, arranged by composer in alphabetical order, is designed to give the busy record enthusiast authoritative comment on the vast field of today's recorded literature on LPs in brief, easy-to-use form.

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ANOTHER AUDIO Technician's Views

A Letter to the Editor

▲Of particular interest to me is the new series presenting the point of view of the recording engineer. The problems besetting criticism of recorded music are not encountered in other fields of artistic criticism. The book reviewer has an uncomplicated existence. His raw material is the printed word. Barring a (rare?) typographical error in production (which *might* alter the author's intention), there is no "linkage" between the printed page and the reviewer's mind except the human eye — what a far cry from the elaborate chain of acoustic, electrical, and mechanical elements which intervene between the concert hall and the ears of the record reviewer!

Even if the record reviewer *could* work from an absolutely truthful recreation of the original performance, he would still be facing hazards unknown to the book reviewer: The word "apartment" in a novel will be read as "apartment" by *anyone* who picks up the book (assuming that the reader has sufficient visual resources to read, and adequate intellect to grasp ordinary words.) But the poor record reviewer! Where the eye was called upon only to distinguish among 26 letters of the alphabet, the ear now must simultaneously integrate a complex array of sounds. Ignoring the subjective reactions to sound, there are wide variances — between individuals — in *objective* capacities to hear (such as, the limit of high frequency perception; threshold of discomfort related to intensity at various frequencies; relative "efficiency" of hearing at differing pitches . . . not to mention the more subtle effects of individual tolerance for certain types of distortion introduced by the recording-reproducing process).

The use of the eye, in reading, is *not* demanding upon the eye's total capabilities;

the most severe *color blindness* will not hamper anyone's ability to read.

On the other hand, to evaluate a recorded performance, the ear is required to be extremely versatile: it must endure wide variations in sound level; it must differentiate among a host of sounds, and an infinite variety of attacks and decays — and transmit a valid resultant to the mind.

How many "color blind" critics are there?

Superimposed on the base of purely objective hearing attainments (or deficiencies) then, are the well known twin villains of:

- (1) subjective (or acquired) astigmatisms *in the mind* of the reviewer; and
- (2) the *legion* of distortions which can be introduced from microphone to speaker.

No matter how thoroughly trained a reviewer may be (nor, for that matter, how capable his judgments), without underlying sincerity, honesty, and *independence*, his final appraisals will be affected by either overt or unconscious partisan considerations.

And, of course, the final verdict on a given record (*not* your magazine, though) may be influenced by such indirect sources as a personal dislike for that *boor* of a sales representative of the XYZ Company (or, very rarely I trust, that the performing artist may happen to be of a religious persuasion, or political allegiance, antagonistic to the reviewer).

As your magazine has pointed out, the greatest single improvement in reviewing can be had through the *intelligent* use of the best reproducing instruments by the critics.

Well, despite the innumerable vexations and exasperations that must be the lot of magazine publishers and record reviewers (which I don't pretend to be able to nail down specifically), I wish you continuing success.

Sincerely Yours,

D. L. Julian,
Mobile, Ala.

Record Notes and Reviews



There is in souls a sympathy with sounds, and as the mind is pitched the ear is pleased with melting airs or martial, brisk or grave; some chord in unison with what we hear is touched within us, and the heart replies.

—William Couper

Orchestra

BEETHOVEN: *Symphony No. 7 in A;*
Vienna State Opera Orchestra conducted by **Hermann Scherchen**. Westminster LP WL 5089, \$5.95.

▲THIS performance is in the stolid German tradition. The second movement fares best, though marred by a frequent lack of unanimity. In the opening movement the first theme is close enough to the tempo marking, but the remainder is so slow and easy going that its traditional effect of power is lessened.

The third movement demonstrates a phenomenon all too common in musical interpretation — the tempo is almost exactly that of the composer, yet this powerful *scherzo* sounds most often like a *minuet*. Toscanini (RCA Victor LCT-1013), who does not equally accent the first note of every bar, gets a smoother running result. The heavy playing of *all* the notes here disrupts the music's flow, and the middle section is exaggerated in its slowness.

In spite of some unsteadiness in tempo the last movement has a rhythmic clarity not often achieved in this work. Here

Scherchen's pace is perhaps preferable to a more rapid one in which many notes are lost.

The recording is very realistic. Despite the age of the recording, Toscanini's interpretation retains sufficient power to hold this listener, and Walter's excellently recorded rendition (Columbia LP ML-4414) for its adherence to the tradition which Scherchen fails to observe. —S.K.

BORODIN: *Prince Igor* — *Polovetsian Dances*; **RIAS Symphony Orchestra**, Berlin, conducted by **Ferenc Fricsay**; **DVORAK:** *Slavonic Dances Nos. 1-4, Op. 46*; **Munich Philharmonic Orchestra** conducted by **Fritz Rieger**. Decca LP Disc DL-9546, \$5.95.

▲IT IS apparent that the name of Fricsay on a disc is one to watch for. This Hungarian conductor has uncommon musical insight and feeling. His performance of the familiar *Igor* dances has lyrical grace and dramatic power without excess. I like it better than the Van Beinum version though it is not quite as brilliantly recorded. Rieger's treatment of the Dvorak dances is a bit too stolid for my taste, with his constant insistence on the beat, but the Munich orchestra plays well. Satisfactory recording. Decca should back up Fricsay with Rieger — as the latter

seems always to turn in worthwhile performances.

—J.N.

BRAHMS: *Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68, Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Joseph Keilberth.* Capitol LP disc P-8153, \$4.98.

▲HERE we have a performance that is warm-hued, well paced, and balanced with a romantic stress that recalls the conductor's personal feelings for Schumann (*First and Second Symphonies* — Capitol P-8129). The realistic reproduction is marred by some breaks in continuity from tape splicing.

—P.G.

BRUCKNER: *Symphony No. 4 (Romantic); Leipzig Symphony Orchestra conducted by Herman Abendroth.* Urania LP set URLP-401, \$11.90.

▲FOR TWO MOVEMENTS one hears a performance of Bruckner's most popular early symphony that is notable for sumptuous tone and ease of movement. Urania's splendid recording conveys all this, as well as the oratorical conception that Abendroth employs in the charming scherzo and in the overlong finale.

The Leipzig Orchestra's strings and brasses show up very well indeed and are far ahead of the failing Vienna Symphony Orchestra, which recently played the work under the excellent direction of Otto Klemperer.

—C.J.L.

ENESCO: *Roumanian Rhapsody No. 1; BERLIOZ: Rakoczy March; DVORAK: Slavonic Dance No. 1; LISZT: Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2; London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Jean Martinon.* MGM 10" LP disc E541, \$3.00.

▲M. MARTINON, who has acquired quite a name for himself on the continent, certainly deserves better treatment than this. A pupil of Muench and Roussel, he is plainly outside his *metier* in these works. In addition, the London Philharmonic plays with surprising *ennui*. On top of that, the recording is no better than it should be.

—D.R.

HAYDN: *Symphony No. 43 in E flat (Mercury); Symphony No. 50 in C major; Chamber Orchestra of the Danish State Radio conducted by Mogens Woeldike.* Haydn Society LP disc HSLP-1041, \$5.95.

▲THE DANISH conductor has a real feeling for Haydn — the playing of both these symphonies is gratifying for rhythmic fluency, orderliness and expressive feeling. Of the two works, No. 43 proved most appealing with its distinctive profile. Its nickname is derived from its quick outer movements, both of which are wonderful Haydn *Allegros*. The slow movement has a stateliness and delicacy, while the minuet has a genuine swagger. A work to be remembered. No. 50 has a first-rate opening movement and minuet, but elsewhere does not sustain interest on first acquaintance like No. 43. The reproduction is adequate.

—P.H.R.

MOZART: *Serenata Notturna in D major, K.239; TELEMANN: Suite for Flute and Strings; The Zimbler String Sinfonietta with James Pappoutsakis (flute).* Decca LP disc DL-8522, \$5.95.

▲MOZART at twenty was a seasoned composer, and his "Night Serenade" — written for a solo group of two violins, viola and double bass, and a concerto grosso of string orchestra with timpani — is a wholly delightful work. There have been several recordings of it, but none which has the elegance and excellence of performance found here, nor the fine reproduction.

The Telemann suite, once recorded by Kincaid and the Philadelphia Orchestra, is a sort of first cousin to Bach's *Suite No. 2 in B minor*. The work contains in all seven sections, an overture, four dances, a slow section in the style of an Italian aria, and a bright, engaging finale. Telemann, an ingenious work-a-day composer in his time, was a proficient contrapuntalist with a productivity second to none. Much of his music was written for diversion, but some of his compositions suggest a more serious occasion. This ingratiat-

ing suite is among the latter. The present performance has an intimacy of style which the previous one lacked. The flutist, Pappoutsakis, may not efface memories of Kincaid but his playing is consistently pellucid and proficient. His is a gentler tonal quality, befitting to this chamber ensemble. The clear, clean recording is ear-pleasing.

—J.N.

MOZART: *Serenade in D major, K250 (Haffner); Vienna Symphony Orchestra conducted by Clemens Krauss.* Vox LP disc PL 6850, \$5.95.

IT IS astonishing that music which Mozart wrote for a social purpose and for but a single occasion should enchant us as much today as it did his original audience. Its first audience was the wedding party of Elizabeth Haffner, daughter of the family so genial to the composer. The serenade is festive, sparkling and graceful. The melancholy spots are few but telling. Like much early Mozart the style is *galante*, but having been written in 1776 it is more polished and refined.

Elegant and pleasing as this music is, the present performance fails to communicate the elegance and expressive qualities of the music. Krauss conducts with little shading, an unvarying tempo and a complete disregard for those dynamic subtleties which prevent a work of this *genre* from seeming repetitious. In addition, the recording, while passable, certainly doesn't illuminate the orchestra.

—D.R.

PROKOFIEFF: *Scythian Suite and Lieutenant Kije Suite; Vienna Symphony Orchestra conducted by Hermann Scherchen.* Westminster LP disc WL-5091, \$5.95.

AN UNUSUALLY fine recording, except for some exaggeration on the high end, is the real glory of this disc. Never before has one heard so much of Prokofieff's masterfully scored *Scythian Suite* and his modestly entertaining *Kije*.

Though most of us are more familiar with Scherchen's postwar conducting activities of the classical Viennese masters,

he has long espoused the music of his time and given it currency long before it became popular to do so. That background is shown in the clean-sounding, transparent readings that he gives both works. If his interpretation of the *Scythian Suite* lacks some of the muscular energy that it can take, it is nevertheless the best detailed version on records and preferable to any other I can remember since Defauw's.

Slow pacing, sometimes effective, but debatable in at least two sections of *Kije*, makes Scherchen's performance seem a good deal heavier than Désormière's recent mercurial version (Capitol P-8149). Even here, however, there are always repeated manifestations of Scherchen's ability to turn a graceful phrase, to balance a string chord, and to keep music moving with ease.

—C.J.L.

RACHMANINOFF: *Symphony No. 2 in E minor, Op. 27; The Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Eugene Ormandy.* Columbia LP ML-4433, \$5.45.

MR. ORMANDY once recorded this symphony with the Minneapolis Orchestra. Since then, one suspects, he has re-studied the score, for the present performance is smoother and more persuasively handled. There is plenty of energy where needed but there is also refinement which belongs to the composer's poetic moods. The dark-hued string quality of the Philadelphia Orchestra is just right for this music. There is a certain majesty and solemnity to Rachmaninoff's music that seems to me to be served here in the best manner. Too, the rich coloring and impressive sonorities are wonderfully exploited in this realistic and properly resonant recording.

It is fitting that the Philadelphia Orchestra play this work, as this was Rachmaninoff's orchestra in America.

—J.N.

RESPIGHI: *Botticelli Triptych; Vienna State Opera Orchestra conducted by Franz Litshauer; LOCATELLI: Concerto da Camera; Vienna Chamber Orchestra with same conductor.* Vanguard LP disc VRS-418, \$5.95.

▲RESPIGHI'S evocation of three paintings by the 15th-century Italian painter, Botticelli, is one of his most attractive lyrical suites. While the melodies are all his own, they have the character and quality of the older world to which the paintings belong. Thus, in the first panel — *Spring*, the pastoral quality suggests old folk tunes, and in the second — *The Adoration of the Kings*, there is appropriate medieval feeling. The last panel — *The Birth of Venus* — is the most colorful section, with the most imaginative writing.

The Locatelli is a fine example of an early 18th-century Italian *Concerto da Camera*, with an opening *Adagio* worthy of Bach, a sprightly *Allegro* and a stately *Minuet* with ingeniously elaborate variations. The use of the modern piano in this music seems hardly fitting. However, under Litschauer's knowing direction, both works are splendidly performed, and the realistic recording does justice to all concerned.

—P.H.R.

SCHUMANN: *Carnaval*; **GOUNOD:** *Faust-Ballet Music*; Decca LP disc DL-9548, \$5.85; **CHOPIN:** *Les Sylphides*; Royal Opera House Orchestra of Covent Garden conducted by Hugo Rignold; **TCHAIKOVSKY:** *Nutcracker Suite*; same orchestra conducted by Robert Irvin. Decca LP disc DL-9550, \$5.85.

▲THE TIE-IN on these two discs is that each is called "a Sadler's Wells Ballet Presentation." There are pictures from the ballets on the fronts of the jackets and notes about them on the backs. All of this does not obscure the fact that the performances are no more than pedestrian. The Tchaikovsky and Chopin are particularly tired when compared with the fine Désormière versions. Both the Chopin and the Schumann appear in new orchestrations by Gordon Jacob. The latter benefits; the former sounds much the same as other arrangements. These are doubtless fine performances for ballet work; for straight listening they are only passable. The recording is quite adequate.

—D.R.

STRAUSS: *Don Juan* and **WAGNER:** *Die Götterdämmerung—Siegfried's Rhine Journey*; The NBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Arturo Toscanini. RCA Victor LP disc LM-1157, \$5.72.

▲TOSCANINI'S *Don Juan* is tempestuous, electrifying in its fervor, beautifully detailed, and altogether a sumptuous musical delight.

This is the third Rhine Journey Toscanini has taken for RCA Victor. On this occasion, every note in the score sounds. There will be few listeners, I imagine, who will not hear a visceral passage or two vibrating cleanly in their ears for the first time. There is good movement, too, throughout the work, but there is not the sweep, abandon, or excitement here of the old New York Philharmonic version. This seems rather a bit stolid in comparison, in spite of the fact that Toscanini's brasses get excited enough to overblow on more than one occasion. Still it is the best Rhine Journey on LP and no one will want to miss the *Don Juan*.

The recording, accomplished in Carnegie Hall, is mostly good. There are, however, moments of harsh, muddy sound and somewhat noisy surfaces. —C.J.L.

STRAVINSKY: *Petrouchka*; New York Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Dimitri Mitropoulos. Columbia LP disc ML-4438, \$5.45.

▲THAT Mitropoulos has grown in stature as an artist and acquired an authentic patina of musical taste since his arrival in America some 15 years ago cannot be denied. But he is still the showman. Virgil Thomson once wrote that Mitropoulos was usually far more interesting for what he did to a piece of music than what he did with it. I feel that Thomson's judgment applies here no less than it applies oftentimes to much of Mitropoulos's present work with the New York Philharmonic.

Mitropoulos is a great orchestral technician, make no mistake. This beautifully recorded disc would reveal proof of that. It would show the conductor's ability to obtain the widest variety of or-

chestral sonorities at more dynamic levels than almost any other leader gets. And there is no getting around it, Mitropoulos works hard at achieving his effects, and reasonably often a few of them have a fresh, imaginative, tasteful quality rare in the work of any director. Frequently, as in this disc, however, ultra-fluid tempi, unusual accents and phraseology, and strange balances will make a work seem somewhat lacking in its known sense and content.

Petrouchka is a great masterwork by anyone's standards. If you think it deserves what most would call a traditional performance, then Ansermet's version (London LLP-130) will be preferred, for Mitropoulos' is hardly traditional.

—C.J.L.

SULLIVAN-MACKERRAS: *Pineapple Poll*; Sadler's Wells Orchestra conducted by Charles Mackerras. Columbia LP disc ML-4439, \$5.45.

▲CHARLES MACKERRAS has taken choice bits from twelve of Sir Arthur Sullivan's operas and arranged them for dancing. *Pineapple Poll*, the most brilliant hit of Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet history, is the result.

The tunes, of course, are almost everywhere delightful. If the arrangement is slightly reminiscent of Rosenthal's brilliant orchestration for *Gaité Parisien* here, and of slick international film style there, one must admit that it usually sounds well. The music, however, runs easily 40 minutes. While I have no doubt that it supports John Cranko's choreography to a fare-thee-well, I feel that few will want to listen to all of this music at one sitting. One section at a time ought to be just right.

The recording here is superb in almost every way, the surfaces a model. —C.J.L.

TCHAIKOVSKY: *Souvenir de Florence*; Vienna State Opera String Orchestra conducted by Henry Swoboda. Westminster disc WL-5083, \$5.95.

▲TCHAIKOVSKY showed his esteem for Italy in two scores, his *Capriccio Italien* and his *Souvenir de Florence*. The first work has established itself in the repertoire

of the symphony orchestra, but the latter — written as a string sextet — has never established itself in the chamber music repertoire. It is a more serious composition which, because of some of its massive string effects, probably fares better in a string orchestral arrangement. Most writers speak slightly about this music, but the program annotator has found others who give it just praise. There is none of the excitement and popular sentiment here that is found in the *Capriccio Italien*, for the composer (a decade later) was more serious and contemplative in his tribute to Italy. Maybe a recording of this work is just what was needed to give the musical public the right opportunity to know this work. And I suspect that a lot of the composer's friends are going to like it — for the only way an impression of a work can "be a lasting one" is in repetition. The performance impresses me as a satisfactory one, as indeed is its fine reproduction.

—J.N.

Concerto

BACH: *Concerto in D minor for Three Pianos and Strings*; Robert, Gaby and Jean Casadesus (pianos) with the New York Philharmonic-Symphony conducted by Dimitri Mitropoulos; *French Suite No. 6 in E major*; Robert Casadesus (piano). Columbia 10" LP disc, ML 2196, \$4.00.

▲LAST YEAR, the Casadesus family had a personal triumph when they appeared with Mitropoulos and the Philharmonic in this work. It was one of the liveliest performances of any Bach multi-keyboard work heard for a long time. This disc duplicates in every way last year's performance of this interesting and engaging concerto. Columbia has recorded it admirably. Each instrument, even when in ensemble, is heard clearly, and the string tone is lovely.

This is not a particularly scholarly performance and neither is that of the older Casadesus on the Bach suite. He plays

it very much as he plays Scarlatti, with a nice lilt, consummate precision, pleasant shading and a somewhat tender feeling for rubato. He is, in addition, well recorded. The approach in both these works is anything but dry and some may find the enthusiasm of the artists a bit too familiar for its own good. But it makes the disc a joy to sit-back and listen-to.

—D.R.

BACH: *Concertos for Harpsichord and Orchestra, No. 3 in D and No. 4 in A;* Kurt Rapf, harpsichordist and conductor with the Vienna Chamber Orchestra. Bach Guild LP BG 509, \$5.95.

▲THE THIRD CONCERTO is an alternate version of the famous *E major* violin concerto. In its present state it seems a bit overdressed and not a little ornamented, but this may well be through unavoidable comparison with the original. The fourth concerto is pure delight. Whether it was originally written for *oboe d'amore*, as has been suggested, or not, it comes off extremely well as a harpsichord concerto.

Mr. Rapf acquires himself well in the difficult dual role of performer and conductor. One never seems to exist to the disadvantage of the other. In matters of interpretation, however, I find him a bit dry. The recording is quite good — particularly in delineation of the string and harpsichord tones. —D.R.

BARTOK: *Violin Concerto*; Tibor Varga and the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Ferenc Friesay. Decca LP DL-9545, \$5.95.

BARTOK: *Two Rhapsodies for Violin and Orchestra*; Emanuel Vardi with the New Symphony Orchestra conducted by Franco Autori and Tibor Serly. Bartok Records 10" LP disc BRS-306, \$4.75.

▲THE *Violin Concerto* was originally recorded by Deutsche Grammophon. While the reproduction is very good, well balanced and realistic, it lacks the shining qualities of the Rostal version (London) and the rich resonance of the Menuhin

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(RCA Victor). Of the three performances, Varga seems to penetrate the music more than Rostal or Menuhin, and one never feels that with him the going is tough on occasion. His playing has contemplation as well as brilliancy. Fricsay's orchestral direction is more carefully detailed than either Sargent's or Dorati's and more varied rhythmically. He obtains plenty of sweep and abandon without over-emphasis. Bartok's *Violin Concerto* is an immediately accessible work, one that any listener can enjoy for — as I have previously said — its expressivity transcends its intellectuality. Despite the recording quality, I lean toward this performance.

Bartok's *First Rhapsody* was written for Szigeti and recorded by that artist in 1940 for Columbia with the composer at the piano. The second is unfamiliar to me. It has more dash and brilliancy of coloration, though I think the first is the better work. Both follow the same pattern — a slow introductory opening movement and a dance section in varied tempo. The works are highly difficult but accessible to the average listener. They are not too far removed from the composer's *Hungarian Folk Tunes* which Szigeti and Bartok once recorded. The orchestral arrangements of these pieces provide more exciting effects and coloring. Vardi is a proficient violinist and a gifted musician, and the two conductors are thoroughly efficient performers. The recording has essential realism.

—P.H.R.

BLOCH: Schelomo; SAINT-SAENS: Concerto No. 1 in A minor; Leonard Rose (cello) with Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York, conducted by Dimitri Mitropoulos. Columbia LP ML-4425, \$5.45.

▲LEONARD ROSE, a fine musician who can elicit dark, sumptuous sounds from his instrument, is perfect for Bloch's loose, overlong, but powerful rhapsody *Schelomo*; and just shy of perfect for the Saint-Saëns concerto, which is all style and which requires a trifle lighter touch in many passages than Rose can supply.

Mitropoulos is at his best, particularly in *Schelomo*. The level of his and Rose's

work is so high that their performance might have been the best on records. Columbia's engineers (who ought to be allowed an occasional fall from grace in view of their recent long list of superlative efforts) have made that impossible by severely monitoring the majestic orchestral climaxes that one remembered from Mitropoulos' concert performances of this music. The Nelsova-Bloch version (London LPS-138) is therefore preferred.

—C.J.L.

HAYDN: Cello Concerto in D; SAINT-SAENS: Cello Concerto in A Minor, Op. 33. Maurice Gendron with the Vienna State Opera Orch., conducted by Jonathan Sternberg. Oceanic LP disc OCS 23. \$5.95.

▲THE serviceable *D major concerto*, whether by Haydn, Kraft, or Gevaert, it is not known with certainty who wrote the work, makes extremely nice listening, and so this first LP version will be welcomed despite the fact that Gendron, although maintaining an extremely beautiful singing tone, occasionally scrapes and sometimes lacks completely fluid articulation. His version does not replace the admirable Feuermann recording (Col. M262). In the Saint-Saëns he seems more at home, perhaps because there his extremely fine tone and his tendency to bear down on the bow both show to good advantage. Still, this work is a very elegant one and needs a really impeccable performance. For this reason the new recordings by Piatigorsky and Rose may be preferred. Both performers give a needed integrity, often lacking in the work itself. In both concertos, Mr. Sternberg is often a bit stiff, though in the latter — essentially a rhapsodic work — he unbends more often. The recording is very life-like and favors the cello well.

—D.R.

MOZART: Concerto in C major, K.415; Piano Sonata in C major, K.330; Artur Balsam and the Concert Hall Symphony Orchestra conducted by Henry Swoboda. Concert Hall LP disc CHS-1116, \$5.95.

MOZART: *Concerto in D major, K.451;*
12 Variations on "Je suis Lindor" from
Beaumarchais' "Le Barbier de Séville";
Artur Balsam and the Winterthur
Symphony Orchestra conducted by
Victor Desarzens. Concert Hall LP
disc CHS-1045, \$5.95.

▲BOTH of these concertos are neglected works. The *C major* was revived in recent years by Landowska, on one of those rare occasions when she turned to the piano, in a Philharmonic-Symphony concert with Rodzinski conducting. Landowska being Landowska added cadenzas after cadenza, at almost every cadence in the work, and extended playing time at least ten minutes. Whether the lady thought she helped the work or not remains unknown to me — but I can say she prevented repeated performances of this work which I recorded from the air. This is not one of Mozart's great concertos — its opening movement seems rather

sought-after, its slow movement however grows on one, while its final rondo is quite delightful with its expressive slow sections in the minor. Balsam plays the work nicely without any pretentious efforts to point up detail. His performance would have been better, in my estimation, had he had a more sensitive Mozart conductor. The recording is realistic enough but of the non-resonant type. This matters less in the piano sonatas with its lovely slow movement, where a home-intimacy is preferable.

The *D major Concerto* is one that Mozart favored as much as its predecessor — the *B flat, K.550.* Virtuosity prevails in the first two movements, while the lightweight finale is as delicate and airy as a summer breeze. In this opus, Balsam has a conductor who knows how to nuance a line and keep the rhythm smoothly flowing, and recording that has proper enlivening resonance. The pianist gets more



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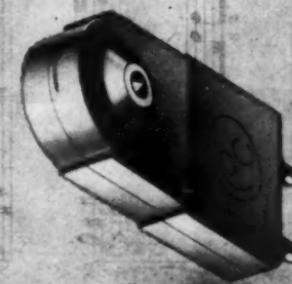
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fluency in his playing, which is orderly but somewhat self-contained. The variations, well played, are moderately engaging, but not as inspired as the Grétry ones (*K.352*) from the same period. —P.H.R.

MOZART: *Concerto for Two Pianos in E flat, K.365; Concerto for Two Pianos in F, K.242; Paul Badura-Skoda and Reine Gianoli (duo-pianists) and Orchestra of the Vienna State Opera conducted by Hermann Scherchen.* Westminster LP disc WL-5095, \$5.95.

▲MOZART did only compose one concerto for two pianos. That one is the *E flat, K.365*. The one in *F, K.242* was originally written for three pianos and orchestra. The third piano part is inconsequential, and in the Breitkopf & Härtel catalogue it is published in duo-piano form. The program annotator for Westminster states that Mozart himself arranged the work for two pianos. In any event, it is one of Mozart's least important works.

The *E flat Concerto*, though, is a masterpiece — one of Mozart's loveliest, most ingratiating works. It is given an eminently respectable reading by Badura-Skoda, Gianoli and Scherchen. They are not as glittering as the Vronsky-Babin-Mitropoulos combination, but they are equally musical. The *concertante* elements are not stressed too highly here; the pianos are more a part of the orchestral texture, whereas in the Columbia reading they are more prominent. Both interpretations are good, and should be heard. Purists probably will prefer the present reading for its greater sobriety. —H.C.S.

SZYMANSKI: *Violin Concerto No. 1, Op. 35; Eugenia Uminski with the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Gregor Fitelberg.* Decca 10" LP DL-7516, \$3.85.

▲THIS sensuously beautiful music, with its exquisite poetic refinement, has been dismissed by unfriendly critics as intemperate and emotionally uncontrolled. Be that as it may, the writer has found that listeners are excited by this music, which

he has successfully played in more than one lecture recital. At least one critic in Philadelphia congratulated the writer on presenting the work in this superbly impressive performance — the like of which, to my knowledge, has not been heard in the concert hall.

—P.H.R.

VIVALDI: *Concerto for four violins. HANDEL:* *Concertos No. 8 in B flat and No. 10 in G minor for oboe and string orchestra. Harry Shulman (oboe) with the Stradivari String Orchestra conducted by Arnold Eidus.* Stradivari LP disc STR604, \$5.95.

▲FOR some time we have known that Arnold Eidus is a talented violinist. This disc clearly indicates that he also has conductorial gifts of no small value. His sweet, clean balancing of Vivaldi's enjoyable concerto (actually a concerto grosso) is the work of a real leader, his suave musicianship ever a pleasure for its graciousness and lack of personal insistence.

One can imagine a Goossens or a Tabuteau making the Handel oboe concertos seem more refined and radiant than they appear here in Harry Shulman's hands. But no matter, this is good, acceptable work that shows the music with no falseness or banality. Good recording everywhere.

—C.J.L.

Chamber Music

BACH: *Sonata No. 1 in G Minor; Ossy Renardy (violin).* London 10" LP disc LPS-423, \$4.95. *Suite No. 2 in D minor and Suite No. 6 in D; Lillian Fuchs (viola).* Decca LP disc DL-9544, \$5.85.

▲UNACCOMPANIED string playing capable of holding the attention is a rare commodity. Miss Fuchs, one of the greatest living violists, achieves this; Ossy Renardy, not quite. In spite of Renardy's technical skill and his suave approach to the music, there is an absence of soaring

quality caused, I believe, by a lack of rhythmic imagination and limited tonal coloring. I would also hesitate to recommend Alexander Schneider's version of the *Sonata No. 1 in G minor* (Mercury LP) for it has its share of vagaries, both rhythmically and time-wise. One must go back to Szigeti — old Columbia recording and all — for an acceptable performance.

One need not go back, however, even to Casals for satisfaction in the two Suites, which are equally effective on the cello or the viola. Miss Fuchs is quite good enough. Need anyone say more?

—C.J.L.

BEETHOVEN: *Piano Trio in G major, Op. 1, No. 2; Piano Trio in D major, Op. 70, No. 1;* The Boston Trio. Allegro LP disc ALG 3026, \$5.95.

▲**BEETHOVEN'S Opus 1** is surprisingly mature. The *largo con expressione* of the

G major is particularly original, being the first of what Bekker calls "those bittersweet pieces such as occur in Beethoven's early work only." The first trio of *Op. 70* is subtitled the "Ghost". This comes from the fact that the *largo* has been called "eerie" upon occasion and, in the composer's notebooks, sketches for the movement are prefaced by sketches for a witches' chorus for an unfinished *Macbeth*. Romantic legend has supplied the connection between the two. Actually the work is anything but ghostly. The outside movements are mere introduction and epilogue to the slow movement which has been called "one of the most wonderful expositions of melancholy in all Beethoven."

The performance is not up to the music. The Boston Trio has good ensemble but one gets the impression they are reading through the score rather than interpreting it to any great extent. The Busch-Serkin trio has set a finer precedent (ML-4128).

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Perhaps some of the fault may be in the recording. It is not up to Allegro's Galaxy level, the piano in particular being poorly served.

—D.R.

BLOCH: *Quintet for Piano and Strings;*
The Chigi Quintet. London LP disc
LLP 382, \$5.95.

▲ THIS QUINTET, first performed in 1923, has now taken its place in the chamber music repertoire as one of the important and enduring scores of the 20th century. No stranger to record collectors, it was available in a fine album by Alfredo Casella and the Pro Arte group in the early thirties (Victor set M-191, withdrawn).

Bloch, who utilized Hebraic themes in other important scores, does not leave the realm of pure, intense musical lyricism in this work, which is one of his most academic. This is not an easy score to grasp immediately. It is at times severely introspective, and throughout, completely uncompromising. However, the importance of this work cannot be overestimated, and surely no definitive chamber music collection can afford to be without this disc.

The Chigi Quintet performs the piece in the very best tradition of Italian instrumentalism, with a complete devotion to its particularly demanding requirements. The recording is clear and faithful.

—A.W.P.

BOCCHERINI: *String Sextet in E flat, Op. 24, No. 1; Sinfonia Concertante in G; Sextet in E flat, Op. 41, for Oboe, Horn, Bassoon and Strings;* **The London Baroque Ensemble** with Sidney Sutcliffe (oboe), Edward Chapman (horn) and Cecil James (bassoon), conducted by Karl Haas. Westminster LP disc 5077, \$5.95.

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▲ HERE is an excellently recorded disc full of attractive music, played with buoyancy and light-hearted skill by a first-rate group. These pieces are among Boccherini's best, especially the *Sinfonia Concertante*, which is not only extremely diverting but also features some instrumental writing that can still be called very daring. Great credit to Edward Chapman, who plays the difficult horn parts with virtuoso assurance, and to Karl Haas, the conductor, for his light touch. —A.W.P.

RAVEL: *Quartet in F major;* **DEBUSSY:** *Quartet in G minor, Op. 10;* **Stuyvesant String Quartet.** Philharmonic LP disc PH-104, \$5.95.

RAVEL: *Quartet in F major;* **The Juilliard String Quartet.** Columbia 10" LP ML-2202, \$4.00.

▲ AMONG the American string quartets now recording, the Stuyvesant is in my estimation exceptionally gifted in the liveness and sensitivity of their performances. Their understanding of rhythmic transformations and style is especially praiseworthy, not only in different works but in the different movements of each composition. The interchange of solo work in their ensemble achieves an equality of power not always found in the best string quartets. In the Ravel this feature of their playing is far ahead of that of any other group that has recorded this work. Moreover, they make more of the rhythmic contrasts than do others, and theirs is the wider range of dynamics. The decidedly tricky second movement emerges from this disc as never before from a record, which is probably due in a large measure to the expert engineering of Mr. Norman Pickering. While the Juilliard Quartet's version of this work is laudable for its ensemble work and the fine balance attained in its recording, their rhythmic contrasts and dynamic range are less varied. On grounds of musicality, they are praiseworthy, but in direct comparison with the Stuyvesant's I find less to enthuse over in their performance.

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Also impressive is the Stuyvesant's playing of the Debussy. But here the recording is not quite as well balanced, for the upper strings are often featured to the disadvantage of the lower ones. Considering the splendid work in both quartets of Alan Shulman, the cellist, this is regrettable. However, the performance is by far the most rewarding one of the Debussy opus at present available on LP. —P.H.R.

Keyboard

AMERICANS IN PARIS: Morley and Gearhart (duo-pianists). Columbia 10" LP disc ML 2197, \$4.00.

▲HERE, is the freshest pianistic talent in a long time! Anyone who has heard the players first disc, *Night Life on Two Pianos* (ML-2033) is not likely to forget the new and vital artistry they bring to anything they turn their hands to. This collection, based more or less roughly on the title theme, contains a spirited rendition of the Gershwin *An American in Paris*; Ravel's *Pièce en forme de Habanera*; Fauré *Nocturne* from *Shylock*; Debussy's *Fêtes*; Poulenc's *Mouvements Perpétuels* (in his own two-piano arrangement), and a section of *Les Jeux de Plain Air*, *Le Tire-litlante*, of the all too little-heard Germaine Tailleferre. In addition the collection contains two popular tunes, *April in Paris* and *Parlez-moi d'amour*, and a lively *pol-pourri* from Offenbach's *La Vie Parisienne*. All the works, with the exception of the Poulenc and the Tailleferre, are in imaginative arrangements by Gearhart himself. Morley is Mrs. Gearhart in private life. Columbia has given them a first-rate recording. If you haven't heard this team you owe it to yourself to do so.

—D.R.

BACH: *Clavierübung* — *Italian Concerto*; *Four Duets*; *Air with Ten Variations in the Italian Style*; Rosalyn Tureck (piano). Allegro LP disc AL 117, \$5.45.

▲THIS is the sixth LP by Miss Tureck in Allegro's series which will encompass all the works in the *Clavierübung*. The

jacket says: "The choice of Rosalyn Tureck as the artist to record . . . was inevitable since she has received universal recognition as one of the foremost living exponents of Bach's piano works." This is, of course, a matter of opinion, and it is by no means agreed that the choice of Miss Tureck was inevitable. Her recording of the *Italian Concerto* is a case in point. She plays it very slowly, about half as fast as did Edith Weiss-Mann. She also plays it surprisingly softly. If one prefers the work performed in a cool manner this is all to the good, but it certainly keeps the monumental aspects of the work from impressing the listener. The duets are very lovely little pieces but again Miss Tureck slows down and whispers. Since they sound better on the harpsichord where the voices are more clearly differentiated, the admirable recording by Frank Pelle (Vox PL 509) is preferred. The variations have often been called the "Little Goldberg Variations" and, although they are not a part of the *Clavierübung*, they are of interest and deserve recording. Miss Tureck plays all of these works rather intimately, with an extremely nice feeling for the phrase and a detachment which, while never really warm, is often quite elegant. The recording is good.

—D.R.

BEETHOVEN: *Piano Sonatas in B flat* (Op. 22) and *C sharp minor* (Op. 27, No. 2 — *Moonlight*); Kurt Applebaum (piano). Westminster LP disc WL-5078, \$5.95.

▲APPLEBAUM continues his Beethoven sonata cycle for Westminster with two of the more frequently heard works. His playing here follows the norm he previously established: respect for the composer, scrupulous musicianship, and a somewhat tight technique. In early-period Beethoven the pianist is quite convincing, provided the notes are in his fingers. He has more success here with the *B flat Sonata* than with the last movement of the *Moonlight*, the articulation of which is not precisely a model of accuracy. —H.C.S.

BEETHOVEN: *Sonatas in A flat, Op. 110, in F sharp, Op. 78 and in E, Op. 14, No. 1; Kurt Applebaum (piano), Westminster LP disc WL-5090, \$5.95.*

▲IN THIS continuation of Westminster's Beethoven Piano Sonata cycle, Kurt Applebaum presents readings that come up to the norm he previously has set — sound, musical, intelligent, a little rough pianistically. In the great *A flat Sonata*, the fugue has a somewhat turgid sound about it, and the inversion, in one or two places, almost falls apart. Apart from this movement, the work receives a successful reading; and in the delightful *F sharp major Sonata*, Applebaum achieves a properly fluid, singing quality. His ideas about the early *Sonata in E* are traditional all the way through.

—H.C.S.

BEETHOVEN: *Sonata in C sharp minor (Moonlight), Op. 27, No. 2; Sonata in E flat (Les Adieux), Op. 81a; Rudolf Serkin (piano). Columbia LP disc ML-4432, \$5.45.*

▲INTO everybody's life a little rain must fall. To pianists, such a sad sprinkle is the first movement of the *Moonlight Sonata*. It's played to death; nothing can be done with it; it is impossible to revivify. Serkin goes dutifully and manfully about his task, but doesn't seem to work up much enthusiasm for it. On the whole, I would call it a fairly routine performance. His *Les Adieux* interpretation has a little more body behind it. The playing itself is rather heavier than in the recent Novaes (Vox) or Gulda (London) discs, but there is much style and resource behind it. I have a feeling, though, that Serkin's playing would be all the better after a year or so away from the concert stage. That he is a great pianist, there is no doubt; but lately his playing tends a little to sound as though he were tired of it all.

—H.C.S.

CHOPIN: *Sonata No. 3 in B minor, Op. 58; Rudolf Firkusny (piano). Columbia ten-inch LP disc ML-2201, \$4.00.*

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▲THIS is a performance that has extreme polish, technical accuracy and all the other ingredients of first-class pianism. Very few pianists have the equipment to take the shimmering second movement at the pace, and with the fluency, shown here by Firkusny. Of the musical virtues of the performance, though, I am a little less convinced. Despite all of Firkusny's undisputed skill, there is not much of the romantic feeling that Novaes, say, showed in her recent Vox recording. Firkusny always plays in good taste, but there is a lack of sweep and tension, and there are a few spots in the finale where his ideas are questionable.

—H.C.S.

MESSIAEN: *La Nativité du Seigneur (Neuf Méditations pour Orgue)*; **Robert Noehren** (organ). Allegro LP alg 3030, \$5.95.

▲THESE NINE Meditations on the Nativity (composed in 1935) are in the realm of mystical reflection. Subjects for each meditation are given, but no detailed program.

The entire composition is generally in one mood, that of painful suffering. The attentive listener is never allowed to relax and enjoy himself. Some may consider this an expression of power, inasmuch as the listener is forced to remain in the territory chosen by the composer, that of Catholic mysticism. As music, however, the truth is that there is hardly enough contrast in this work, whether it be in dynamics, rhythm or tempo.

The recording is excellent, full of power, with none of the booming quality often found in the recording of loud organ passages. The rare moments of noisiness are due rather to the composer's overuse of the high register, accompanied with over-rich harmony. The reviewer feels that the fine playing of Mr. Noehren could have been used to better advantage.

—S.K.

SCHOENBERG: *Variations on a recitative*; **Marilyn Mason** (organ); **SATIE:** *Mass for the Poor*; same organist and a 7-voice chorus directed by **David Randolph**. Esoteric LP disc ES-507, \$5.95.

▲THE SCHOENBERG composition, one of his last, contains ten variations, a cadenza and fugue. As the young American composer, Ben Weber, has said, Schoenberg "seems here to reaffirm . . . the credo that good and beautiful music can still be written within tonal limits." Though this is quality work by anyone's standards, it is still a trifle too bleak in expression to induce one to hear it often. American organist Marilyn Mason plays it crisply and with dispatch.

Satie's early *Mass* creates a somewhat austere impression, but it has redeeming features. It is ever-so-simple in texture, full of melodies that seem right out of the plainchant literature, and rhythmically varied. But it tends to monotony after a while with its succession of chords one after another. The chorus is employed in only one of the work's six sections. Originally set for two organs — the Great Organ and the smaller Choir Organ — the mass is here played on only one instrument, the difference in dynamic intensity supposedly accomplished by the use of different registers. The performance is good, though the female voices lack sufficient penetration. The recording of both works is well up to Esoteric's high standards.

—C.J.L.

OGINSKI: *Polonoises in A minor and G major*; **LANDOWSKA:** *Bourrée d'Auvergne*; *The Hop*; **POLONAIS:** *Gagliarda*; **CATO:** *Chorea Polonica*; **RA: MEAU:** *Air grave pour deux Polonois*; **COUPERIN:** *Air dans le goût Polonois*; **LANDOWSKA** (arr.): *Three Polish Dances*; **CHOPIN:** *Mazurka in C (Op. 56, No. 2)*. Wanda Landowska (harpsichord). Victor LP disc LM-1186, \$5.72.

▲Landowska, in her own album notes, says, "The pieces in this recording are those Paderewski loved most. I often played them for him and — at his request — repeated them." Paderewski, Landowska points out, loved the harpsichord and (though Landowska is coyly modest about it) had a great admiration for the little lady who played it for him. "How often," Landowska reminisces, "he said

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to me: 'I did not know that one could make this instrument sing!'"

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SCHUMANN: *Davidsbündlertänze; Arabesque*; Ray Lev (piano). Concert Hall Society LP disc CHS-1104, \$5.95.

▲ SCHUMANN'S long Op. 6, the "David" dances, is one of his loveliest and most sensitive collections of miniatures. It has never achieved the popularity of the *Carnaval* because of its disjointed structure. Also, these days, not many pianists can play them. Romantic pianism is a style almost vanishing. Pieces like the *Davidsbündlertänze* need, in addition to a big technique (which almost everybody has nowadays), a nice feeling for adjustments in dynamics, the smoothest of legato phrasing, a thorough knowledge of pedal resource (which few today possess), and above all, a certain *manner* consisting in part of rhythmic flexibility, in part of unabashed sentiment.

Miss Lev has the technique all right. She does not seem to be able to summon up the lightness, the variety of touch, the imaginative feeling that is an integral part of the "David" dances. Muscularity that suits Prokofieff does not suit Schumann. —H.C.S.

SPANISH PIANO MUSIC: Nine pieces played by George Copeland. MGM 10" LP disc E87, \$3.00.

▲ MUSIC with a Spanish flavor has always been George Copeland's *forte*. Here we have divers pieces by Albeniz, Luga, Granados, Nin, Infante, and Mompou that show just how efficient Copeland can be when he plays music he loves and understands. Most of the music is fresh, but everyone will recognize Albeniz's famous *Tango*, and quite a few will recall Granados' *La Playera* and Infante's *Tientos*, so diligent have been Rubinstein's and Iturbi's efforts in their behalf.

That much charm is here testifies to Copeland's mastery. He certainly gets little help from a recording that has that all-too familiar "card-board box" sound. The surfaces are gritty, too. —C.J.L.

Voice

BACH: *Cantata 51, Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen*; Margot Guilleaume (soprano), A. Steffan-Wendling (violin), W. Reinhard-Emke (violin), M. Forst (cello) and Bach Orchestra of Stuttgart conducted by Hans Grischkat; *Cantata 189, Meine Seele röhmt und preist*; Claus Stemann (tenor), Friedrich Milde (oboe), H. U. Nigemann (flute), Eva Holderlin (organ) and same orchestra. Renaissance LP disc X 35, \$5.95.

▲ THE SOPRANO who can negotiate the difficult *fioratura* of Bach's very instrumental writing in this fifty-first cantata is rare in any age: one always approaches a performance with some misgivings. Miss Guilleaume emerges from the ordeal with flying colors. The spirit of rejoicing is in her singing even though she may not quite convince us that rejoicing comes easily to her. But it should be added that the ever-admirable Elisabeth Schwarzkopf found the going even tougher (English Columbia LX 8756-58), though her unusually lyrical and appealing tone stood her in good stead through

the more sustained sections of the cantata. Mr. Stemann, who sings the tenor cantata, is less impressive. Though obviously intelligent, he is not gifted with a particularly appealing voice — his tone lacks "edge" — and his singing is inclined to be square-cut, especially in recitative. He does not, therefore, altogether supersede Pierre Bernac (HMV DB 5193-94) or Max Meili (Anthologie Sonore 23), whose performance would be preferred were it not abridged.

—P.L.M.

BACH: Easter Oratorio; Maja Weis-Osborn (soprano), Hilde Rossl-Majdan (contralto), Kurt Equiluz (tenor), Walter Berry (basso), Helmut Wo-bitsch (trumpet), Kurt Rapf (organ) and Vienna Akademie Choir and Chamber Orchestra conducted by Felix Prohaska. Bach Guild LP disc BG 507, \$5.95.

▲**BACH'S Easter Oratorio**, according to Spitta (quoted in the record notes), "has of all his compositions 'the fairest right to the name of 'oratorio'." For all that, and for its brevity — which should commend it to more modest choirs with the desire to sing some Bach — it is extremely little known and has not been published in a practical edition. It may well be, of course, that what the oratorio has to offer is eclipsed by similar portions of other works, that it is too typical for its own good. Still it is a Bach composition, and a worthy contribution to the meager literature of Easter music. Surely no one will deny the beauty of its outstanding gem — the tenor lullaby *Sanfte soll mein Todeskummer* — which should have long since become well known.

The general impression of the performance is decidedly a good one. The *Sinfonia* is brightly played, properly jubilant but light in touch, clear in texture. The chorus sings with good spirit, too, and sounds well if a little top-heavy. The soloists are good, with some reservations in regard to the tenor who has about all he can do to manage the notes without trying to communicate much. The orchestra is not always a model of unanimity.

—P.L.M.

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FAMILY SINGERS: Trapp Family Singers conducted by **Franz Wasner**. Decca LP disc DL 9553, \$5.85.

▲MR. ENGEL'S collection is a cross-section of what is today the standard Christmas repertoire — *Pat-a-pan*, *Corpus Christi*, *The Wassail song* and *Midwinter* along with the long familiar *Silent night*, *It came upon a midnight clear*, *O little town of Bethlehem*, *God rest you merry gentlemen*, *Good King Wenceslas*, *O come, all ye faithful* and the rest. Mr. Randolph goes a little farther, dividing his program between "standard" and "concert" carols, and taking us over the European continent as well as to England. The Ukrainian *Carol of the bells*, the Swedish *Saint Steffan* and the French *Bring a torch* are among those present. The Trapps for their part go the whole way, with an international program sung in the original languages and dialects. Engel's group is the most obviously "trained," indeed occasionally carrying rhythmic precision to the point of jerkiness, but showing up well in the more quiet and sustained selections. Randolph works with a solo group with good if rather vibrant voices. Both groups cut some of their songs to the bone — for example *Good King Wenceslas* does not make a story without all the stanzas. The Trapps perform in their familiar unruffled manner, rather more strongly recorded than usual. Any of these recordings will make an acceptable present, though one should not forget the excellent rival attraction of Robert Shaw's outstanding Christmas program, recently announced as an LP (Victor LM 112). The Randolph set has an elaborate booklet giving not only the words but the tunes of the carols sung.

—P.L.M.

THE ITALIAN MADRIGAL: *Una pan-*

thera in compagnia de Marte (Ciconia); *Ussellette selvaggio per stagione* (Bologna); *Così pensoso com' amo mi guida* (Landini); *De'! dimmi tu che se' così fregiato* (Landini); *Io son pellegrin* (Anon., ca. 1350); *Scenes* from the madrigal comedy *La pazzia senile* (Banchieri); *Io son bella e favorita*, from the madrigal comedy *Saviezza gioranile* (Banchieri); *Amor che mi consigli?* (Festa); *Damon e filli* (Vecchi); *Da così dolla man sei stato fatto* (Palestrina); *Ahi che quest'occhi miei* (Palestrina); **Vassar Madrigal Singers** conducted by **E. Harold Geer**. Allegro LP disc ALG 3029, \$5.95.

▲THIS COLLECTION is planned to illustrate the development of the Italian madrigal. The first side presents the 14th-century *Ars nova*, the second the new and contrasting type of composition known as the madrigal in the 16th century. Since the riches of the field are far greater than even the scholarly research that has sought to uncover them, such wholly unfamiliar programs as this continue to surprise us with little masterpieces of great charm and freshness. As the liner points out, Vassar has a particularly rich musical library of which Mr. Geer has made admirable use. The singers do not sing any arrangements, so that their program is as authentic as can be. It must be admitted that such a recital is not for everyone to listen to without interruption. The average hearer is apt to wish Vassar were a co-educational institution, despite the good vocal material and accurate ears in the group and the obviously effective training they have had. For the specialist and for the educator, however, this well-reproduced disc is a "must." —P.L.M.

MARGARET KLOSE RECITAL: *Nachgesang*; *Der Geisterlantz*; *Fragment aus dem Aeschylus*; *Iphigenie*; *Der König in Thule*; *Dem Unendlichen*; *Verklärung* (Schubert); *Lamento d'Arianna* (Monteverdi); *Serse—Largo* (Handel); *Orfeo ed Euridice—Ach, ich habe sie verloren* (Gluck); **Margaret Klose (contralto) with **Michael Raucheisen****

(piano) and Prussian State Orchestra conducted by Robert Heger. Urania LP disc URLP 7017, \$5.95.

▲THE NOBILITY of Miss Klose's voice is no news, but here is a first opportunity to judge of her versatility. Her program — a rather odd one — shows her to best advantage in the lieder. The wonderful lament from Monteverdi's *Anna* is not improved by its German translation, and the very forcefulness of the singer's native language leads her to overstatement. Add to this an over-emphatic orchestral background and the result though effective declamation is hardly 17th century opera. Even the Respighi arrangement twice recorded by Gabriella Gatti (HMV DB 6515 and Cetra BB 25087) is not so overblown as this, and the singing is "classic" in a way that this is not. For the Handel *Largo* the contralto returns to the original Italian, and here she sings with dignity and a fine line, but adds a second stanza unknown to me. Surely the point of this aria is made in one verse. The aria of Orpheus is sung in German, a little slow in tempo and more than a shade heavy. Miss Klose's penchant for the dramatic sums up the Schubert songs. *Nachlegesang* (to a text by Kosegarten, not Mayrhofer — misspelled in the notes) requires soft sustained singing — not the lady's *forte*. The *Fragment*, being declamatory, comes nobly to life, and *Geistertanz* is effectively dramatized. *Iphigenie* and *Der König in Thule* leave something to be desired, but *Dem Unendlichen* and *Verklärung* (from the English of Pope) impressively make their points. The recording is good, though the piano is sometimes overshadowed. —P.L.M.

LEONCAVALLO: *I Pagliacci* (Opera in 2 Acts); Carla Gavazzi (Nedda), Carlo Bergonzi (Canio), Carlo Tagliabue (Tonio), Salvatore di Tommaso (Peppe), Marcello Rossi (Silvio), with Orchestra and Chorus of Radio Italiana conducted by Alfredo Simonetto. Cetra-Soria LP set 1227, two discs, \$11.90.

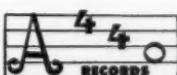
▲THE ITALIANS have always liked abundant vigor — sap, some might say — in their performances of *Cavalleria* and *Pagliacci*. They especially like big tenor voices for the role of Canio, though just why this harassed player should be heroic has never been justified. This performance is typical of those heard in Italian opera houses — straightforward, unrelentingly theatrical, aiming to stir the pulse of the listener. The orchestral direction is sound, the singing not unagreeable to the ears though lacking in the most expressive qualities. Tagliabue's Tonio is hard-driven. Bergonzi's Canio is forceful and full-toned — no subtleties here and no finesse. His is a big voice which, at this stage, he uses well enough. Gavazzi was a better Minnie and Adriana than a Nedda — some of the music does not lie well for her voice. Her *Ballatella* lacks ease, and she leaves out the trills. Rossi's Silvia is better sung than Harvout's in the Columbia set. But the Columbia performance has a certain freshness in its production — in the admirable lyric artistry of Tucker, Amaro and Heyward (Peppe) — not encountered here. But tradition is served in the present set. The recording is realistic, though less resonant than the Columbia one. —P.H.R.

MACHAUT: *Messe de Notre-dame*; The Dessoff Choirs and the New York Brass Ensemble conducted by Paul Bœpple. Concert Hall LP disc CHS 1107, \$5.95.

▲THE FABULOUS *Notre Dame Mass* of de Machaut, supposedly composed for the coronation of Charles V of France in 1364, was performed last season at Town

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Hall by the present artists. Its popular success was unmistakable. This music, though not particularly diverting, was at once rewarding to the lay ear. Critical opinion of the concert performance was divided, and so it must remain regarding this one. The notes do not tell which edition of the work is being used but it is not that of Kurt Sachs, recorded in part for *L'Anthologie Sonore*, nor is it that of Columbia's Eric Hertzmann. It is possible that the edition may be the work of the conductor. In an excellent booklet issued at the original concert, Mr. Boepple noticed that the score survives the worst interpretative anachronisms, and adds, "music historians will perhaps forgive us for those we are about to commit if we succeed in convincing our audiences of the particular significance this music has for us today." In this he is successful. The chorus and wind group are well trained and perform with a remarkable conviction. They are also very well recorded. However, the vocal music has been somewhat prettified and its corners over-smoothed. One remembers Sachs' notes: "This chiselled music imperiously demands shrill voices, strongly sustained singing and uniform sonority, free from all that is dear to our present-day choirs."

—D.R.

MOZART: *Mass in F (Missa brevis), K.192; Dixit et Magnificat; Mozarteum Chorus and Orchestra of Salzburg.* Lyrachord LP disc LL 18, \$5.95.

▲**AFTER THE FLOOD** of long and elaborate masses issued during the last couple of years, a work so short and to the point as this comes with the air of refreshing novelty. At first it all seems rather businesslike and down-to-earth, in accord with the liner quote in which the composer describes the time limits on masses written for performance in Salzburg. However, as one delves more deeply into the form and spirit of the work one feels the more strongly the concision and unity of the setting. Each section is a very logically developed musical movement.

This recording will do more to satisfy the curiosity and interest of established

Mozarteans than to win converts (if anybody still needs to be converted) to his way of musical life. There is something a bit superficial, precious perhaps, especially in the first movement. The tempo seems to me too fast, and it has a kind of nervous twitch. By the time the *Agnus Dei* is reached this has worn off, and the music has begun to flow as it should. There is some wobbly solo singing, especially by the alto and the bass. Nor is the reproduction altogether satisfactory. There is a rather shallow brilliance which is not enhanced by its considerable power. Perhaps Salzburg Cathedral is not an ideal place for recording.

—P.L.M.

MOZART: *Die Zauberflöte — Possenti numi; Le noze de Figaro — Non piu andrai; Die Zauberflöte — Qui sdegno non s'accende; Le noze di Figaro — Se vuol ballare; Don Giovanni — Maddalena, il calologo; Deh vieni alla finestra; Finch' han dal vino; Ezio Pinza (basso) with RCA Victor Orchestra under Alfred Wallenstein.* Victor 10" LP disc LM 107, \$4.67.

▲**ONE** can only conclude that Mr. Pinza was not satisfied with his Columbia Mozart recital (ML 4036) since he has elected to duplicate so much of it herewith. It is therefore sad to be so forcibly reminded that these great days of the basso's popularity have not coincided with the period of his greater vocal glory. The choice of records, then, is between smoother (if not, even then, completely controlled singing) and richer, more refined recording. As for the background, I prefer the spirit of Walter, though just as surely Wallenstein has the better orchestra to work with. The recitative preceding *Se vuol ballare* is definitely improved by more harpsichord and less bass. But those of us who remember Pinza in the days of his *Don Giovanni* and *Figaro* will not be satisfied with this for a memento. It is amusing to compare his Victor recording of the *Serenade* and *Champagne* song from *Don Giovanni* (Victor 1467) dating back to the first years of his Metropolitan *Don*. Even then the *tessitura* of the former played tricks with his intonation, and taking the

latter at break-neck speed he has never been able to articulate its musical notes as Mozart wrote them.

—P.L.M.

OPERATIC ARIAS by Rosa Ponselle:

La Tosca—*Vissi d'arte* (Puccini), *Manon Lescaut*—*In quelle trine morbide* (Puccini), *Sadko*—*Song of India* (Rimsky-Korsakoff), *Cavalleria Rusticana*—*Voi lo sapele* (Mascagni), *Lohengrin*—*Elsa's Traum* (Wagner), *Il Trovatore*—*D'amor sull' ali rosee* and *Mira, d'acerbe lagrime* (with Stracciari) (Verdi), *La Bohème*—*Si, mi chiamano, Mimi* (Puccini), *Maritana*—*Scenes that are brightest* (Wallace), *Madama Butterfly*—*Un bel di* (Puccini). Golden Legend LP disc 1201, \$5.85.

▲These are acoustic recordings which Miss Ponselle made for Columbia from 1918 to 1923. All show the dark beauty and opulence of her voice, its flawless range, though some of her artistry is stylistically debatable. The tempo, for example, at which she sings *Vissi d'arte* is much too slow. Some of the Puccini arias she sings a key lower than written. This, I am given to understand, was because she thought they were more expressive for her voice in the lower key. This disc is a cherishable souvenir of a great singer who retired all too early from public life. The acoustic recording is amazingly realistic, better than her later acoustic Victor releases. The record is released by Addison Foster, 1226 Montgomery Ave., Narberth, Pa.

—P.H.R.

PUCCINI ARIAS: Gianni Schicchi — *O mio Babbino caro*; *Tosca* — *Vissi d'arte*; *Madama Butterfly* — *Un bel di* and *Death Scene*; *La Rondine* — *Ore liete divine*; *Turandot* — *Tu che di gel sei cinda*; *Manon Lescaut* — *Sola, abbandonata*; Dorothy Kirsten (soprano) with **Metropolitan Opera Orchestra** conducted by Fausto Cleva. Columbia 10" LP disc ML-2200, \$4.00.

▲**ALWAYS** an intelligent artist, Miss Kirsten here handles some of Puccini's most difficult scenes with musical confidence, but not always with sufficient emotional weight. Her light, clear voice is

heard at its best in the *Rondine* aria; elsewhere she does not quite succeed in making us forget others who have sung these famous arias. Her *Butterfly* excerpts are full of meaning and well sung, though the *Death Scene* is not easy music. Her *O mio Babbino caro* is not sentimentalized, and her *Tosca* aria has dramatic meaning. The *Turandot* suggests she might make a good Liu. Her *Manon Lescaut* aria is good, but one wishes she had chosen the two arias from Act II instead, especially the neglected *L'oro o Tarsi* which she does so well in the theatre. Cleva provides satisfactory orchestral accompaniments and Columbia's engineers provide realistic reproduction.

—J.N.

PURCELL: *Te Deum, Jubilate in D, The Bell Anthem*, "O Sing Undo the Lord;

The Purcell Performing Society conducted by **John Reymes King**. Allegro LP disc alg-3027, \$5.95.

▲**HERE** are two pieces written for St. Cecilia's Day, and two anthems, by the English master Purcell. All have a few effective moments but at least one listener suspects that they are sturdier than they are made to sound here. The truth is that the performances of one and all are quite below the accepted professional level. The recording is a little brash. —C.J.L.

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ROSSINI: *Stabat Mater*; **Anton Dermota** (tenor), **Paul Schoeffler** (baritone), **Ilona Steingruber** and **Dagmar Hermann** (sopranos), **Vienna Akademiechor** and **Vienna State Opera Orchestra** conducted by **Jonathan Sternberg**. Oceanic LP disc OCS-24, \$5.95.

▲AFTER ROSSINI had the disappointment of finding his *William Tell* (1829) unpopular, he wrote nothing until 1832. At that time, after having completed the first six sections of a piece of sacred music for a certain Don Varela of Madrid, Rossini was laid low by lumbago. He asked someone else to complete the task. A hybrid *Stabat* was then sent to the Don, who paid and never knew what he got. When Don Varela died in 1841 the manuscript was sold to a publisher. Rossini (who had never intended the work for publication) sued, and the manuscript became the property of the composer's publisher. Rossini then finished the work by adding four more sections.

First performed in Paris on Jan. 7, 1842, it was a tremendous success. To the end of the 19th century, it was thought by many to be Rossini's finest work. Written in the best accepted Rossini style — lots of orchestral crescendoes and many brilliant vocal showpieces — its expressive content during our time has been considered suspect. The music does little to complement the text. Another retarding factor in our time has been the lack of first class bravura vocalists to do the music justice.

In spite of their continental reputations, the singers are not fully able to cope with the music. Only the Akademiechor and State Opera Orchestra of Vienna are up to their assignments and their work is cramped a bit by the unyielding stiffness of Jonathan Sternberg's conducting. The recording is bright and clean most of the time. —C.J.L.

SCHOENBERG: *Pierrot Lunaire*; **Ellen Adler** (reciter) with a chamber ensemble conducted by **Rene Leibowitz**. Dial LP disc 16, \$5.95.

▲WHOEVER had charge of the engineering of this disc got the balance between voice and instruments just right. It is a pity that such good work that mirrors quite a good, if insufficiently intense, performance of Schoenberg's celebrated *Pierrot* is so marred by noisy surfaces.

Ellen Adler, an American who speaks perfectly acceptable German, has a voice of such lightness that she has difficulty in projecting the more outspoken passages in her part. Moreover, she has trouble with the big skips indicated in Schoenberg's precisely notated speech line. A sound knowledge of and love for her work is, however, at all times present. Leibowitz and his men give a fine account of themselves. —C.J.L.

SONGS: *Russian, Spanish and Portuguese*; **Jennie Tourel** (mezzo-soprano) with **George Reeves** (piano). Columbia 10" LP disc, ML 2198, \$4.00.

▲MISS TOUREL, whose pure tone and consummate artistry have made her one of today's finest concert singers, presents a varied program which well exhibits her talents. The Russian works are more or less familiar, including two Dargomijsky songs, *I Still Love Him* and *My Darling Girls*; two Gretchaninoff pieces, *Over the Steppes* and *Lullaby*, and two of Moussorgsky, *On the River Don* and the exhilarating *Hopak*. These she sings with the dark intensity which made her former recording of the Moussorgsky *Songs and Dances of Death* such an engrossing experience. The Iberian songs include the *El Mayo Discreto* of Granados; *Coplas de Curro Dulce* of Obradors; Joaquin Nin's *Pano Murciana*; Villa-Lobos' amusingly brief *Miau*, and two exquisite songs by Ginastera, *Triste* and *Chacarera*. In the latter group Miss Tourel shows herself to even better advantage, perhaps through reason of temperament, but in all her artistry is above reproach. Mr. Reeves is a properly persuasive accompanist and Columbia has recorded them both with a maximum of fidelity. —D.R.

ARIAS and DUETS from Verdi and Mozart; Helge Roswaenge (tenor) and Heinrich Schlusnus (baritone) with Orchestra and Chorus of Berlin State Opera conducted by Hans Stein-kopf. Urania LP disc UURLP-7027, \$5.95.

▲ROSWAENGE and Schlusnus are in fine form in this mélange of operatic material, which is mostly Verdi, with only a single aria from Mozart's *Cosi fan tutte*, sung by the tenor. Verdi in German does not seem right, and in the arias and duets from *Traviata*, *La Forza*, *Ballo in Maschera* and *Don Carlos* many words fall on the ear of one familiar with the Italian language (which flows so much better) in a jarring way. Somehow the German "Gott" hits me between the eyes whereas the Italian "Dio" is gentler and less forceful. I suspect these recordings were acquired from Radio Berlin, like the previous *Traviata* ones featuring Cebotari. The recording is quite realistic. Selections are *Di provenza* from *Traviata*, Scenes 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9 from Act III of *La Forza* (famous duets), Riccardo's aria from the last act of *The Masked Ball*, the tenor aria *Der Odem der Liebe* from *Cosi fan tutte*, and the duet from Act I of *Don Carlos*. —J.N.

WAGNER: Die Meistersinger (Opera in 3 Acts); Elisabeth Schwartzkopf (Eva), Erich Kunz (Beckmesser), Otto Edelmann (Hans Sachs), Friedrich Dalberg (Veit Pogner), Hans Hopf (Walther von Stolzing), Gerhard Unger (David), Ira Malaniuk (Magdalene), and others with the Bayreuth Festival Theatre Orchestra and Chorus conducted by Herbert von Karajan. Columbia LP set SL-117, 5 discs, \$27.83.

▲THAT a complete opera recorded at the Wagnerian shrine arrives at long last is something to rejoice over. This is a landmark in recording history. When the Bayreuth *Tristan* was issued in the late twenties, the spirit of recording companies was not so dauntless as it is today. But, the necessity then of so many discs, with hardly more than four minutes to a

side, did not make completeness seem conducive to a successful phonographic venture. One thing the advent of Long Playing records has brought about is complete performances. It is certainly fitting that Columbia — the originators of LP — should have had the first opportunity to present a full Wagner opera from Bayreuth.

The history of Bayreuth has not proved that this festival theatre was always the best place for the performance of the composer's musical dramas. While the present performance is in many ways smoother and better proportioned than the recent Urania presentation, it is less brilliantly recorded and less impressive in several roles — notably that of Hans Sachs. The acoustical qualities of Bayreuth (this set was "recorded at the performances at the Bayreuth Festival theatre in August 1951") are not on a par with those that Columbia has obtained in Metropolitan operatic presentations made in the 30th Street Studio. Moreover, the recording is uneven, often blanketing the voices in a disadvantageous way. The scale of dynamics is more varied than in the Urania set, but the *fortissimo* passages seem unduly monitored, and in the big choral scenes there is not the over-all brilliancy and tonal fulness found in the Urania set, nor for that matter in the second-act set of London.

Otto Edelmann, who sang a fine Pogner in the London set, is not a completely convincing Sachs; he has neither the tonal variety or richness of Schoeffler nor the noble opulence of sound of Franz. In the conversational sections of the score, his singing is often dry and colorless. But his artistry is nonetheless of a high order. Schwartzkopf, as Eva, is ever appealing to the ear, but she does not make as much of the text as Guedin in London's second act. That she and Edelmann are guilty of anticipating the opening beat of a bar before the orchestra, on a number of occasions, makes one wonder about rehearsals.

The big news about this set is the singing of Hans Hopf (due to be heard at the

Metropolitan this winter). He is the first Walther I have ever heard who is completely able to retain the best qualities of his vocal resources through the entire opera. Moreover, he can sing *pianissimo*. From his first act entrance to his singing of the difficult *Preislied*, he is satisfying vocally and believable as the young Knight. Kunz's realistic Beckmesser, an extraordinary characterization, is for once truly out-sung by Walther. Ira Malaniuk is a first-rate Magdalena, but Gerhard Unger's David is rather colorless as his voice has too much of the alto timbre. The balance of the cast is satisfactory.

The orchestral direction of von Karajan is solid and highly competent. Some of his direction is rather impersonally methodical — the *Prelude* is treated in this way — but as the opera progresses he reveals sympathetic feeling for the poetic expressiveness of the music's mood.

All in all, this is a performance that one can enjoy — one on which Wagner himself would surely have placed his stamp of approval. There's a lot of music here, and the fact that Columbia has got it all on five discs is something for which to be grateful in these times. —P.H.R.

WOLF: *Der Corregidor*. Karl Erb (Don Eugenio de Zuniga), Marta Fuchs (Donna Mercedes), Kurt Böhme (Juan Lopez), Karl Wessely (Pedro), Gottlob Frick (Tonuelo), Josef Hermann (Tio Lukas), Margarete Teschemacher (Frasquita), Georg Hann (Repela), Helena Rott (Duenna), Dresden State Opera Chorus and Saxon State Orchestra conducted by Karl Elendorff. *Urania LP set URLP 208*, 3 discs, \$17.85.

IT IS NOT difficult to understand why this opera has not made its way into the popular repertoire. The libretto by Rosa Mayreder-Obermeyer — based on the same Alarcon story that occasioned Falla's *Three-Cornered Hat* — though full of literary merit, is not good theatre. But why so much charming and subtle music, full of the expressionistic, descriptive and

sheerly musical devices that make the Wolf songs unique, should have been allowed so long to go virtually unheard, remains a mystery. Two of the best known songs from the *Spanisches Liederbuch* are introduced, but most of the music comes as a real novelty. Wolf, an avowed Wagnerian, aside from using a handful of *leitmotiven*, frequently all but quotes. It is the lyrical portions of the score in which he feels most at home. The connecting music, symphonic in texture and richly orchestrated, is frankly only connecting material.

To be blunt, we might wish the conductor had been Bruno Walter. Elendorff is an old hand, but there are many details in the orchestral web which the listener will miss, even though he follows the score. This is not to be blamed entirely on the conductor, however, for in the approved manner of opera recordings the singers get the better of the balance. One more complaint concerns the numerous cuts — in some cases amounting to mutilation.

The best of the singers is Josef Hermann, in the role of the miller. The distinguished sopranos, Teschemacher and Fuchs, sound very lovely indeed. Karl Erb inclines to overdo, and plays fast and loose with the notes in his part. None of the other singers will disappoint. Vocally the reproduction is excellent. —P.L.M.

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